



**May 31, 2005**

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### **Message from the Assistant Secretary: AoA Celebration of Long-Term Living**

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On May 4, HHS Secretary Leavitt hosted the annual Leadership Council of Aging Organizations Breakfast with 43 National Aging organizations present. The Secretary, who was joined by other agency heads, led the discussion. He thanked attendees for their support and emphasized the importance of reaching out to Medicare beneficiaries with information about the new benefits. HHS Acting Deputy Secretary Alex Azar, along with our other HHS partners, joined the Administration on Aging, area older Americans and the agencies that serve them for the National Walk on the Mall, our fourth annual physical fitness event to kick off Older Americans Month. This event promoted the importance of physical activity to healthy aging through participation in a 30-minute walk around the National Mall in Washington, DC. AoA again sponsored the Older Americans Month Photography Contest to enhance the image of older Americans through pictures. Senior centers from across the country submitted photographs, all taken by seniors, which reflect the 2005 Older Americans Month Theme. In addition to the pictures, each photographer was asked to write a brief essay describing how their photograph embodies the Older Americans Month theme. The winner was announced at a ceremony hosted by Senator Smith and Senator Kohl held in Washington, DC on May 23.

Older Americans Month is celebrated each May to recognize older persons for the important roles they play in their families, communities, and workplaces. The 2005 Older Americans Month theme, "Celebrate Long-Term Living," recognizes not only that Americans are living longer, healthier lives than ever before, but that the majority of older Americans are living in their homes and remaining active in their communities far into their later years. When Older Americans Month was first proclaimed in 1963, only 17 million Americans lived to celebrate their 65th birthday. Today, over 35 million Americans have lived to celebrate their 65th birthday, and by the year 2030, the older population will double to 70 million. Thank you for joining AoA in this year's celebration of Older Americans.

Josefina G. Carbonell

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## **Nominations for the 2005 Secretary's Innovation in Prevention Awards**

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HHS seeks nominations of public and private sector organizations to receive the 2005 Secretary's Innovation in Prevention Awards Initiative. This activity is part of the Steps to a Healthier U.S. Initiative and will identify and celebrate organizations that have implemented innovative and creative chronic disease prevention and health promotion programs. To be nominated, a program must address at least one of the following risk factors: obesity, physical activity or nutrition. The department intends that these awards will provide an opportunity to increase public awareness of creative approaches to develop and expand innovative health programs and duplication of successful strategies. Nominations must be received by **5:00 PM, June 9, 2005**. Nominations can only be made online at <http://www.prevent.org/awards/>. For more information, contact Partnership for Prevention at (202) 785-4943 or [2005InnovationAwards@prevent.org](mailto:2005InnovationAwards@prevent.org).

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## **CMS Announces Real Choice System Change Grants to States**

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On April 29, 2005, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced that approximately \$35 million in new grants will be awarded to states to develop programs for people with disabilities or long term illnesses. The "Real Choice Systems Change Grants" will help states and territories enable people with disabilities to reside in their homes and participate fully in community life. Since 2001, CMS has awarded 238 RCSC grants, totaling approximately \$188 million to 50 states, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the District of Columbia. The introduction of the "Systems Transformation Grants" in 2005 will give states a chance to implement broader, more integrated, and flexible reform options that address issues from self-direction to information technology."

Three types of grants are offered under the title, "Real Choice Systems Change Grants":

- Family-to-Family Health Care Information and Education Center Grants;
- Systems Transformation (STG) grants; and
- Aging and Disability Resource Center Grants.

In addition, some funding will be used to perform a national evaluation and develop grant support tools. A copy of the 2005 Real Choice Systems Change solicitation package, including the application forms, can be obtained at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Applications are due July 7, 2005. For more details about the grants, visit the CMS web site at: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/newfreedom/>.

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**2005 WHCoA Date Moved to December 11 to 14, 2005**

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Dorcas R. Hardy, Chairman of the 2005 White House Conference on Aging Policy Committee, announced that the Policy Committee has voted to move the date of the 2005 WHCoA to December 11 to 14, 2005. The new location will be announced shortly. The original date of the WHCoA was October 23 to 26, 2005. In discussing the new date, WHCoA Executive Director Scott V. Nystrom said, "Due to the overwhelming interest in this decade's WHCoA, and an extraordinary response from potential exhibitors, it makes sense to move the WHCoA to a larger venue. This change will improve the comfort and overall experience for our 1,200 delegates to the Conference." The White House Conference on Aging is a decennial event intended to produce recommendations for the President and Congress to help guide national policies on aging for the next decade and beyond. "We are entering a bold, new, and exciting era of America's history—one characterized by an aging population. The 2005 WHCoA will be an excellent opportunity for citizens across the United States to help shape a positive future for all Americans as we enter this new era," said Chairman Hardy. The 2005 WHCoA will address the aging issues of today and tomorrow including the nation's 78 million baby boomers who will begin to turn 60 in 2006. Delegates selected by the Governors, Members of Congress and the National Congress of American Indians will be announced soon, and will be notified in the very near future about the WHCoA registration process. The WHCoA is still accepting applications for At-Large Delegates who will be selected by the Policy Committee. The deadline for applications for the At-Large Delegates is June 1, 2005. For more information about the At-Large application process and the 2005 WHCoA, please visit <http://www.whcoa.gov>.

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## **Medicare News**

### **Medicare Partnership Campaign**

The organizations within the Aging Services Network are central partners with AoA, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Social Security Administration as we help Medicare beneficiaries access new benefits under the Medicare Modernization and Improvement Act of 2003.

- The new drug benefit under the MMA will go into effect on January 1, 2006. During the next year, our role will be critical as we move from awareness of the opportunity to sign-up for the new drug benefit.
- As AoA reaches out to all older Americans to make sure that they take full advantage of the new Medicare benefits, we will need the help of the entire aging services network. We invite you to join the AoA Medicare Partnership Campaign at <http://www.aoa.gov/medicare/registration/Registration.asp>.
- As a Medicare Aging Network Partner, AoA will send you updates and information on an on-going basis, offer you outreach and promotional materials for distribution, invite you to participate in Webinars and teleconferences, recognize your organization as a Medicare Aging Network partner and keep you informed as you assist elders in your community.

For more information on the Medicare Partnership Campaign, visit:  
<http://www.aoa.gov/medicare/index.asp>.

## **Notices to Deemed Eligible Beneficiaries for Limited Income Subsidy and the Social Security Administration Application for Beneficiaries who May Qualify for Limited Income Subsidy**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services posted on its website copies of the model letters that will be mailed to deemed eligible beneficiaries who will be automatically eligible for the limited-income subsidy for the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit.

Later this month, CMS will begin to mail the "Important Information from Medicare about Paying for Prescription Drugs" notice to all people with Medicare who are automatically eligible to receive extra help paying for a Medicare prescription drug plan. Seven million people who have Medicaid and Medicare or are in a Medicare Savings Program will receive this notice, along with 400,000 people who have Medicare and Supplemental Security Income.

There are **three versions** of this notice: **one for people with Medicare and Medicaid, one for people in a Medicare Savings Program**, and one **for beneficiaries who receive Supplemental Security Income**. Copies of the notices are available online at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medicarereform/lir.asp>.

This summer, other people who do not automatically get the extra help, but who have been identified as potentially eligible for the extra help, will get a different letter from the Social Security Administration telling them that they can apply to get extra help from Medicare to pay the cost of prescription drugs. This letter (which includes an application) will be mailed throughout the summer on a rolling basis starting at the end of May and ending in August. Starting July 1, the SSA application will be available online and beneficiaries can always call Social Security to apply by phone at 1-800-772-1213. Other materials are available on SSA's web site: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/organizations/medicareoutreach2/>.

## **Transportation News**

### **United We Ride White House Report on Human Services Transportation Coordination**

On May 24, AoA joined the Department of Transportation, in announcing the release of the United We Ride White House Report on Human Services Transportation Coordination, mandated by the President's February 2004 Executive Order on Human Services Transportation Coordination. The report, developed by the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility, outlines recommendations to strengthen existing transportation services to be more cost-effective, available and to help providers be more accountable and responsive to the transportation needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities and individuals with limited income. To highlight the essence of United We Ride, and help feature where the action really happens – the local community – CCAM also announced leadership awards for those communities that are already improving services for better coordination. AoA encourages all members of the aging network to become familiar with the United We Ride effort. To access more information, to sponsor or be a part of a framework for action planning action and to join with local agency counterparts in transportation, disability, employment, veterans affairs and education, transportation service providers, aging advocacy groups and older adults themselves to coordinate

transportation services for everyone, visit: <http://www.unitedweride.gov>. For a copy of the full report visit: [http://www.unitedweride.gov/0216\\_LAYOUT\\_1.3F\\_v6.pdf](http://www.unitedweride.gov/0216_LAYOUT_1.3F_v6.pdf) or for more information about the awards visit: [http://www.unitedweride.gov/1\\_849\\_ENG\\_HTML.htm](http://www.unitedweride.gov/1_849_ENG_HTML.htm).

### **Public Comment Requested Regarding Transportation**

The Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility is seeking public comment from the transportation industry, human service providers, and consumers of human transportation services, specifically on the Technical Assistance needs in the area of human service transportation. The public is invited to share its views on existing technical assistance efforts and/or identify thoughts about future options for delivering effective technical assistance to the field. Your comments may also include familiar TA practices that would be valuable at the state and/or local level. All comments must be submitted by **June 15, 2005** via fax or electronic format. Faxed submission to: Public Comment, United We Ride Office, at (202) 366-3136. Electronic submission: May be sent to [UnitedWeRide@fta.dot.gov](mailto:UnitedWeRide@fta.dot.gov). For more information, visit: <http://www.unitedweride.gov/UWRAPRILFINALnewsletter.doc>.

### **AoA News**

#### **National Legal Assistance and Elder Rights Projects Program Announcement**

AoA is soliciting applications under Program Announcement HHS-2005-AoA--LA-0505 to carry out National Legal Assistance and Elder Rights Projects. These projects are aimed at building and strengthening the national system of legal assistance and improving the quality and accessibility of the legal services provided to older people. They will provide state and area agencies on aging and community/faith-based organizations that provide legal or other supportive services directly to seniors with one or more of the following: (1) case consultations; (2) training; (3) provision of substantive legal advice and assistance; and (4) assistance in the design, implementation, and administration of legal assistance delivery and elder rights advocacy systems. AoA plans to fund approximately five (5) new grant projects through this competition (contingent on the availability of funds). The deadline date for the submission of applications is July 8, 2005. Applicants are encouraged to submit their proposals electronically. For more information, please visit: <http://www.grants.gov/GetStarted> materials can be obtained from <http://www.aoa.gov/doingbus/fundopp/fundopp.asp> or <http://www.grants.gov>.

#### **More than 500 Participate in AoA Grants.gov Teleconferences**

Grants.gov provides a single source for agencies and organizations to find Federal competitive grant opportunities. Recently AoA held a series of teleconferences for prospective applicants of Federal grants to assist them in understanding how Grants.gov can streamline the Federal grants application process, as well as provide instructions on how to register for Grants.gov. The teleconference was held on four dates in April and May. Those unable to attend one of the teleconferences can now access an audio version of the presentation as well as the accompanying PowerPoint presentation on our AoA website at <http://aoa.gov/doingbus/grants/grants.asp>. We encourage you to use these resources and take advantage of the many benefits offered by Grants.gov. For more information about Grants.gov visit: [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

#### **ABA Resources on Advance Directives Available for Consumers**



The American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging, with AoA funding, has created consumer friendly materials that can help you prepare for the possibility that you will no longer be able to make your own medical or financial decisions. There are a number of legal tools available. A living will allows you to spell out your medical treatment wishes. A health care power of attorney enables you to appoint someone to make any and all health care decisions on your behalf. A health care advance directive combines the health care power of attorney and living will into one document. A durable power of attorney grants someone else the authority to make your financial decisions after you have lost the ability to do so. Visit the ABA site at <http://www.abanet.org/aging/> to locate the "Consumer's Tool Kit for Health Care Advance Planning," plus English and Spanish-language versions of "Health and Financial Decisions: Legal Tools for Preserving Your Personal Autonomy." For information on an AoA-funded legal provider near you, visit: <http://www.eldercare.gov/Eldercare/Public/Home.asp> For statewide senior legal help-lines, refer to: [http://www.aoa.gov/eldfam/Elder\\_Rights/Legal\\_Assistance/SRdirclient.pdf](http://www.aoa.gov/eldfam/Elder_Rights/Legal_Assistance/SRdirclient.pdf)

## **Policy and Program Updates**

### **MyPyramid: Steps to a Healthier You**

On April 19, Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns unveiled MyPyramid, a new symbol and interactive food guidance system. MyPyramid's central message, "Steps to a Healthier You," supports President Bush's HealthierUS initiative which is designed to help Americans live longer, better and healthier lives. MyPyramid, which replaces the Food Guide Pyramid introduced in 1992, is part of an overall food guidance system that emphasizes the need for a more individualized approach to improving diet and lifestyle. It is based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which provide authoritative advice for people two years of age and older about how proper dietary habits can promote health and reduce the risk of major chronic diseases. MyPyramid was developed to carry the messages of the dietary guidelines and to make Americans aware of the vital health benefits of simple and modest improvements in nutrition, physical activity and lifestyle behavior. For more information, visit [MyPyramid.gov](http://MyPyramid.gov).

### **Secretary Leavitt Appoints Members of the Advisory Committee on Minority Health**

On April 22, HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt announced the appointment of eight members to serve on the Advisory Committee on Minority Health. The committee will advise the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on improving the health of racial and ethnic minority groups and on the development of goals and specific program activities for the department's Office of Minority Health. The appointments include: Leo MacKay, Ph.D. (Committee Chair), Joseph Kevin Villagomez, M.A., Cheryl Killion, B.S., M.S., M.A., Ph.D., Edna M. Berastain, M.B.A., Inam Ur Rahman, M.D., RADM Kermit C. Smith, D.O., M.P.H., Adrienne Laverdure, M.D., and Valerie Romero-Leggott, M.D. For more information, visit <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2005pres/20050422.html>.

### **HHS Announces \$63 Million in Grants to Health Centers to Extend Services for Low-Income, Uninsured Americans**

On April 11, HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt announced plans to award 105 new health center grants totaling more than \$63 million. These grants will help an estimated

632,000 Americans, including many without health insurance, obtain comprehensive primary health care services. These grants continue President Bush's five-year initiative to help communities across the country create or expand access to comprehensive primary health care services. Since the beginning of the initiative in 2002, including these new grants, HHS has funded more than 700 new or expanded health centers and increased the number of patients served annually to 13.2 million (estimate for Calendar Year 2004). Some awards will be made in May and the remaining 88 grants will be awarded on or about Dec. 1, 2005, as Fiscal Year 2006 funds become available. HHS' Health Resources and Services Administration manages the Consolidated Health Center Program, which funds a national network of more than 3,600 clinics comprised of community health centers, migrant health centers, health care for the homeless centers and public housing primary care centers. For more information and a list of grant recipients, visit: <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2005pres/20050411.html>.

### **New NHLBI Initiative Introduced to fight High Blood Pressure**

Over half of all Americans age 60 and older have high blood pressure. *Prevent and Control High Blood Pressure: Mission Possible* is designed to mobilize all Americans in the fight against high blood pressure and reduce the more than 1 million heart attacks, strokes, and kidney failure cases caused annually by high blood pressure. The initiative was developed by the National High Blood Pressure Education Program at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. It also is a part of Steps to a HealthierUS—a disease prevention initiative from the HHS. The initiative provides accurate, up-to-date information and materials that can be freely used to combat high blood pressure in local communities and nationwide during National High Blood Pressure Education Month in May and thereafter. It also offers ideas to help participants build new kinds of partnerships to reach broader audiences with their high blood pressure awareness messages. Available resources include: The 2005 National High Blood Pressure Education Month Community Kit, an online network, educational materials, and ideas for new kinds of partnership activities. For more information, visit: <http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/mission/>.

### **Making a Difference**

#### **Oklahoma Long-Term Care Ombudsman Receives Citation From FBI Director**

At the National Ombudsman Training Conference, held April 9-12 in Oklahoma City, the FBI honored Oklahoma State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Esther Houser and Assistant Ombudsman Eleanor Kurtz for their role in the convictions of the former Oklahoma Deputy Commissioner of Health for bribery and Medicaid fraud and two nursing home owners for money laundering and Medicaid fraud. The FBI agent presented a citation to Ms. Houser from FBI Director Robert Mueller III for, "outstanding cooperation and assistance in connection with an investigation of great importance." The citation stated, "The FBI's ability to carry out its investigative responsibilities to the American people has been greatly enhanced through your help, and you can be very proud of your valuable contribution to the success achieved." Ms. Houser and representatives of the Oklahoma Office of the FBI, Oklahoma Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Inspector General also described how their combined efforts over a period of years resulted in the convictions. For more information on the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program, visit the National Long Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center at: <http://www.ltombudsman.org/default.cfm>.



## **Of Interest**

### **July N4A's Annual Conference to Show You How to Get Ready for the Boomers**

From its opening general session, "Boomers in Transition: How the Baby Boomers Will Redefine Aging" through its closing session, "The Aging of the Baby Boomers: Are America's Communities Ready," and everything in between, N4A's upcoming Annual Conference will help you prepare for the next big challenge in aging. Whether you're from a AAA, Title VI agency, or state unit on aging, or are an aging service provider, consultant, policymaker or businessperson, there's a lot for you to learn. The conference theme, "Boomers in Transition: Coming of Age in 2006," reflects the fact that in a very short while the first of the baby boomers become eligible for Older Americans Act services. With additional general sessions and numerous intensives, workshops and more, we know that attendees will leave the conference much better prepared for the coming of the baby boomers than when they arrived. The July 9-13, 2005, conference takes place in Bellevue, Wash. For more information go to <http://www.n4a.org/2005conf/bellevue2005.cfm> or contact Martin Kleffner ([mkleffner@n4a.org](mailto:mkleffner@n4a.org), 202-872-0888).

### **Pension Project Obtains Survivor's Benefits for Elderly Widow**

AoA's Pension Counseling and Information Program is specifically designed to help individuals understand and exercise their pension rights. AoA's Pension Counseling and Information Program has helped tens of thousands of clients to recover nearly \$60 million in pension and other retirement benefits. The program consists of six regional counseling projects covering 16 states and a technical assistance resource center providing substantive training and legal backup services. It's especially fitting to highlight the work of this program on the heels of the Pension Counseling and Information Program's Annual Training Conference held May 23 – 25 in Washington, DC at AoA headquarters. The following case is an example of the types of problems solved by the regional pension counseling projects. Mrs. G, who was widowed in 1998, had tried unsuccessfully for several years to obtain her survivor's benefits. She and her husband were married in the late 1950's, but had not lived together for many years. When Mr. G retired in the late 1980's, he stated on his retirement application that he was divorced. He received a single-life annuity, which ceased when he died. Mrs. G wrote several letters to her husband's former employer after he passed away, but the company continually denied her a benefit. She had heard about the Midwest Pension Rights Project of St. Louis, Missouri from her husband's sister, and contacted the Project for assistance. The Project was able to obtain her survivor's benefit, plus a lump-sum retroactive payment. This benefit recovery was based on the Project's argument that the company had not properly documented the purported divorce, as required by federal law. Mrs. G began receiving her monthly benefit on November 1, 2004. For more information about AoA's Pension Counseling and Information Program, go to: <http://www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprogram/pensioncounseling/pencounseling.asp>.

### **Disclaimer from the U.S. Administration on Aging**

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[http://www.aoa.gov/press/enewsletter/archive/enewsletter\\_archive.asp](http://www.aoa.gov/press/enewsletter/archive/enewsletter_archive.asp)

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#### **About AoA**

AoA works with a nationwide network of organizations and service providers to make support services and resources available to older persons and their caregivers. For more information about AoA, please contact us by mail at U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, Washington, DC 20201; by phone at (202) 619-0724; by e-mail at [aoainfo@aoa.gov](mailto:aoainfo@aoa.gov); or visit us on the Web at [www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov).